



# Improving Staff Performance

A **step-by-step** guide for finding the sources of poor employee performance and taking the **proper corrective actions**

**W**ould you like your employees to do an even better job and enjoy it more? If so, you're in excellent company because thousands of owners and managers the world over have the same goal.

In the case of employee performance, when persons aren't performing to full capability, it can be traced to one of three conditions:

- 1. Lack of Awareness** of what to do: Employees don't know what *actions* they should be taking and what *outcomes* they should be creating.
- 2. Lack of Ability** to do it: They don't have the skills, resources or opportunities necessary for executing the tasks at hand.
- 3. Lack of Anticipation** of enjoyable consequences: They don't expect that accomplishing, or attempting to accomplish, the tasks will result in personal pleasure or enjoyment. We often call this "lack of motivation."

When an employee isn't performing at an acceptable level, it's because at least one of the these three conditions exists. *Eliminate the condition, and you eliminate the performance deficiency!* Conversely, when an employee knows what

to do, is equipped with the skills, resources and opportunities to accomplish those tasks, and anticipates that doing so will produce enjoyment for him or her, that employee will almost always perform to a high level. That leads us to the following "performance formula" (the "three As" of high performance):

**Awareness + Ability + Anticipation of  
performance enjoyment →  
High Performance**

## A Common Misconception

Over the years, I've heard many reasons why the three conditions causing poor performance exist (or why certain workers are unaware, unable or unmotivated). The reasons always center on the notion that the poor-performing workers carry a *faulty personal trait*. The traits managers cite include the *wrong* age, intelligence, emotional makeup, race, nationality, sex, size, social background, family environment, geographic origin and economic status. As compelling as these factors might sound, they are, in fact, merely rationalizations that managers fall back upon when they're ineffective at getting peo-

ple to perform adequately.

If inadequate performance occurs within a pizzeria, it's because one or more of the three conditions has been allowed to arise. And if one of those conditions exists, the reason, quite simply, is *Management has not yet eliminated it*. Or, no one has yet made the poor-performing employees fully aware of what they should be accomplishing; or equipped them with the necessary skills, resources and opportunity to do their jobs; or caused them to anticipate that enjoyable consequences will result from their efforts and accomplishments.

This is a big pill to swallow for many managers because it implies that inadequate employee performance is caused, at least in part, by inadequate managerial performance. However, it's a *positive* pill because, if managerial performance determines employee performance, it means managers have it within their power to create improved — and, eventually, outstanding — employee performance.

What managers need to know, in short, is how to develop their employees' awareness of what to accomplish,

